

Gurdjieff

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(wikipedia):

G. I. Gurdjieff

Georges Ivanovich Gurdjieff (January 13, 1872? – October 29, 1949), was a Greek–Armenian mystic and 'teacher of dancing'. His teaching is about becoming more aware of ourselves in our daily lives.

Biography

Gurdjieff was born in Alexandropol, Armenia (now Gyumri, Armenia), traveled to many parts of the world (such as Central Asia, Egypt, Rome) before returning to Russia and teaching in Moscow and St. Petersburg in 1913.

In the midst of revolutionary upheaval in Russia he left Petrograd (St. Petersburg was renamed Petrograd on September 1, 1914) in 1917 to return to his family home in Alexandropol. During the Bolshevik Revolution he set up temporary study communities in Essentuki in the Caucasus, then Tuapse, Maikop, Sochi and Poti, all on the Black Sea coast of Southern Russia where he worked intensively with many of his Russian pupils.

In mid-January 1919 he and his closest pupils moved to Tbilisi. In late May 1920 when political conditions in Georgia deteriorated, they walked by foot to Batumi on the Black Sea coast, and then Istanbul. There Gurdjieff rented an apartment on Koumbaradji Street in Péra and later at 13 Abdullatif Yemeneci Sokak near the Galata Tower. The apartment is near the tekke (monastery) of the Mevlevi Order of Sufis (founded by Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi) where Gurdjieff, Ouspensky and Thomas de Hartmann experienced the sema ceremony of The Whirling Dervishes. In Istanbul Gurdjieff also met John G. Bennett.

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In August 1921 Gurdjieff traveled around western Europe, lecturing and giving demonstrations of his work in various cities such as Berlin and London. In October 1922, he established the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man south of Paris at the Prieuré des Basses Loges in Fontainebleau–Avon near the famous Château de Fontainebleau.

In 1924 he nearly died in a car crash. After he recovered, he began writing All and Everything originally written by him in Russian and Armenian. He stopped writing in 1935 having completed the first two parts of the trilogy and only having started on the Third Series which had been published under the title Life is Real Only Then, When 'I Am'.

In Paris, Gurdjieff lived at 6 Rue des Colonels–Rénard where he continued to teach throughout World War II.

Gurdjieff died on October 29, 1949 at the American Hospital in Neuilly, France. His funeral was held at the St. Alexandre Nevsky Russian Orthodox Cathedral at 12 Rue Daru, Paris. He is buried in the cemetery at Fontainebleau–Avon.

Timelines, facts and whereabouts of Gurdjieff's early biography before he appeared in Moscow in 1913 are found in his text Meetings with Remarkable Men.

Teaching

Those who had contact with Gurdjieff saw him as a Master – able to practice self–remembering, and work on oneself; in other words a human being able to be conscious of himself.

About his teaching, Gurdjieff once said, "What do I teach? I teach people how to listen to themselves." The teaching addresses the question of man's place in the Universe and his possibilities for spiritual development. Gurdjieff's teaching has many aspects that are well described in 'In Search of the Miraculous' – a book written by P D Ouspensky who met Gurdjieff in Moscow in 1915 and who studied under him for several years.

Gurdjieff believed that man lives his life in a form of sleep, and that higher levels of consciousness are possible. In developing the inner possibility of becoming more aware of ourselves in our daily lives, one is shown a whole new way of living that can enrich our experience of life and acquaint us with our real selves. 'Know thyself' takes on a more concrete meaning. The ability to be 'present' more often (instead of being absent as we usually are in our lives), requires work on oneself over time, guided initially by a teacher trained in the practice of the teaching by those who in turn were taught directly by Gurdjieff or by one of his pupils.

Gurdjieff thought that by making frequent efforts to activate their attention in small things, such as walking, speaking or sitting etc,

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people would gradually become more aware of themselves as living beings through the development of their attention instead of spending their lives asleep in dreams. To this end Gurdjieff also taught movements (which are performed as part of a class) as an aid, and he left a body of music which he brought back from his visits to remote monasteries, which was set down by one of his pupils, Thomas de Hartmann.

Gurdjieff is best-known through the published works of his pupils, such as P.D. Ouspensky, author of *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*, which some regard as a crucial introductory book about his teaching. Others refer to Gurdjieff's own books (detailed below) as the primary text disseminating Gurdjieff's ideas.

Many accounts about Gurdjieff have been written by various authors: A. R. Orage, Thomas and Olga de Hartmann, Fritz Peters, René Daumal, John G. Bennett, Maurice Nicoll and Louis Pauwels among others. Many others were drawn to his 'ideas table': Frank Lloyd Wright, Kathryn Hulme, P.L. Travers, Katherine Mansfield, and the pianist and composer Keith Jarrett.

Three books by Gurdjieff were published after his death: *Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson*, *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, and *Life is Real Only Then, When 'I Am'*. This trilogy is Gurdjieff's legominism known collectively as *All and Everything*. A legominism is, according to Gurdjieff, "one of the means of transmitting information about certain events of long-past ages through initiates." A book of his early talks was also collected by his student and personal secretary, Olga de Hartmann, and published in 1973 as *Views from the Real World: Early Talks in Moscow, Essentuki, Tiflis, Berlin, London, Paris, New York and Chicago*, as recollected by his pupils.

The feature film *Meetings with Remarkable Men* (1979), based on Gurdjieff's book by the same name, depicts rare performances of the sacred dances taught to serious students of his work known simply as the movements. The film was written by Jeanne de Salzmann and Peter Brook, directed by Brook, and stars Dragan Maksimovic and Terence Stamp.

His teaching has been continued by various groups originated after his death, some under the umbrella of the Gurdjieff Foundations in New York, London, and Paris. Gurdjieff founded the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man to train what he called "helper-instructors" to help disseminate and practice his teaching. Today many groups use Gurdjieff's name and ideas, but they may not have been developed via a teacher-student relationship originating with Gurdjieff himself.

Gurdjieff used the "Stop" exercise to prompt his students. Suddenly and without notice a pre-arranged signal would be made, all students would 'freeze' whatever they were doing and hold the position they found themselves in when this signal was made. The students were encouraged

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to use this exercise to notice their habits, tensions and thoughts. A little later another signal would be made and ordinary movement would recommence.

Much has been written about Gurdjieff, and many stimulating anecdotes have been recorded. At one time in his life he set up a workshop to mend anything. Customers would visit bringing with them something broken, they would leave the article with Gurdjieff, who would then find a way of fixing it – whatever it was. Gurdjieff fixed all kinds of things. If he did not know how to mend a particular item he would set about learning enough to repair it.

Short bibliography:

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0919608124

In Russian: ISBN 0919608116

Audio recording (in mp3 format) as read by William J. Welch: ISBN

0919608167

Meetings with Remarkable Men by G.I. Gurdjieff (1963)

Life is only real, then, when "I am" by G.I. Gurdjieff (1974)

Views from the Real World Talks of G.I. Gurdjieff (1973)

The Herald of Coming Good by G.I. Gurdjieff (1933, 1971, 1988)

Videos/DVDs about G.I. Gurdjieff and the Fourth Way:

Gurdjieff's Legacy: Establishing The Teaching in the West, 1924–1949

Part III

Gurdjieff's Mission: Introducing The Teaching to the West, 1912–1924

Part II

Gurdjieff in Egypt: The Origin of Esoteric Knowledge Part I

Meetings with Remarkable Men

Books about G.I. Gurdjieff and The Fourth Way:

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